

Senate Joint Resolution No. 5

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 76

Senate Joint Resolution No. 5—Relative to benefits for Filipino Americans who fought in World War II.

[Filed with Secretary of State July 3, 2007.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SJR 5, Yee. Filipino veterans: benefits.

This measure would request that the Congress and the President of the United States enact the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007.

WHEREAS, On July 26, 1941, in anticipation of war with Japan, President Roosevelt issued an Executive Order calling over 200,000 Filipino soldiers to serve in the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE); and

WHEREAS, Ten hours after Pearl Harbor was attacked, the United States military bases in the Philippines were bombed, causing the war to spill onto the Filipino people; and

WHEREAS, On March 27, 1942, Congress passed Title 8 of the Second War Powers Act, which provided that noncitizens who served in active duty in the United States Armed Forces during World War II shall be granted United States citizenship, meaning that every USAFFE soldier had the right to equal treatment under the law; and

WHEREAS, On April 9, 1942, the United States retreated from the Philippines, leaving 75,000 USAFFE and regular soldiers to the Bataan Death March where close to 10,000 died along the drudge to P.O.W. camps; and

WHEREAS, Even after the American retreat, Filipinos continued to resist, gathering thousands more soldiers and forming guerilla units, who, in coordination with United States command, conducted operations, collected intelligence, and helped prepare for the American return; and

WHEREAS, On September 2, 1945, Japanese military command surrendered the Philippines back to American forces ending World War II on the islands, and Philippine nationals who served in the war began filing for naturalization at the United States Embassy in Manila; and

WHEREAS, Filipino men and women served courageously in the fight for freedom and democracy during World War II, under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur; and

WHEREAS, After the war, the New Philippine Scouts were formed to help reestablish United States authority in the Pacific, causing thousands more Filipino soldiers to be called to serve the United States; and

WHEREAS, In November of 1945, adjudication of applications for naturalization of Filipino veterans were stopped, per order of the United

States Department of State and the Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service; and

WHEREAS, In December of 1945, Congress passed legislation amending the immigration and naturalization law, setting a deadline of December 1946 for Filipino veterans applying for citizenship; and

WHEREAS, On February 18, 1946, Congress enacted the 1946 Rescission Act, which denied World War II Filipino veterans, including the USAFFE, the guerillas, and the New Philippine Scouts equal status as American veterans, which stripped them of equal recognition, compensation, and benefits; and

WHEREAS, In October of 1990, the 1990 Immigration Act was passed, granting United States citizenship to Filipino veterans, which allowed 24,000 Filipino World War II veterans, in their 70s and 80s to receive citizenship, but who were still denied equal status as American veterans; and

WHEREAS, California has long advocated for veterans, including continuation of the \$226 per month disability benefit provided by the California Veterans Cash Benefit Program; and

WHEREAS, The Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007 (H.R. No. 760, 110th Cong., 1st Sess., P. 1150 (2007); Sen. No. S. 57, 110th Cong., 1st Sess., p. S37, (2007)) would provide benefits for veterans, including healthcare, disability pensions, and burial expenses, which are much needed for many of the 24,000 surviving Filipino veterans and their families; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and the Assembly of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature of the State of California respectfully requests the President and Congress of the United States to enact the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the Majority Leader of the Senate, and to each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States.